



Three Rivers Ranger District  
Kootenai National Forest  
Troy Montana  
295-4693



Spring 2016

## **THREE RIVERS NEWS**



Nate Stephens gaining altitude in the Cabinet Mountains

*The Morrison Elementary 6th graders and friends participated in a clean up day to celebrate Earth Day at Alvord Lake. See the photo on the right, that's a lot of trash. Thanks for helping keep our forests clean.*



2) How many lookouts are there on the Three Rivers Ranger District?

3) How many rentals are there?

(Answer on page 3)



### **KOOTENAI N.F.**

### **AVALANCHE PROGRAM**

The 2015-2016 Avalanche Forecasting began with a transition of forecasters as Jon Jerecek entered retirement and turned over the program to Ben Bernall. Forecasting began on Christmas Eve and occurred every Thursday until the end of March. There was a weekly snowpack summary posted on the Flathead Avalanche Center web page at <http://www.flatheadavalanche.org/> on Friday morning. The focus of the program is to provide a summary of conditions by doing stability tests in areas that have both an abundance of winter use as well as the terrain being conducive to create an avalanche hazard. The forecasters spent time in both the West and East Cabinets and the Purcell Range of the Yaak. The program was made possible with funding from the recreation program as well as some much appreciated assistance from the Cabinet and Three Rivers Ranger District fire employees. This year we assisted with an "Introduction to Avalanches" course in collaboration with David Thompson Search and Rescue (SAR) and hope to have more opportunities for education coming next season.

1) How many miles of hiking trails are there on the Three Rivers Ranger District?

(Answer on page 3)



## REQUEST FOR INFORMATION –Starry Goat Project—Callahan Planning Area

The Three Rivers Ranger District is beginning the analysis of the Starry Goat project, an area of the district which includes: Idamont Creek, Logan Creek, Raymond Creek, Star Creek, Ruby Creek, Brush Creek, North Fork Callahan, South Fork Callahan, main Callahan Creek and Goat Creek. It also includes Smith Lake, and the areas of Smith Mountain, Long Mountain, Roberts Mountain and Preacher Mountain. This analysis will help us determine the need for improvements as well as management activities on National Forest System lands. These activities could include vegetative and fuels treatments that involve timber harvest, weed treatment, through mechanical and hand piling, and prescribed burning. Other possibilities include wildlife and aquatic habitat improvement, stream improvement and recreational improvements.

At this early stage of the analysis, we would like to hear from you:

How do you use National Forest lands in these areas?

What resources on National Forest Lands are important to you?

Do you know of unique or important habitats that should be maintained or enhanced?

Do you have site-specific areas you would like to see treated?

Would you like to provide feedback on specific past management activities?

You may comment at any time during the planning process. However, the earlier we receive comments and information, the more useful they will be. If you would like to be on our mailing list or for more information, contact Miles Friend at (406) 295-4693. You can submit comments by email to [comments-northern-kootenai-three-rivers@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-northern-kootenai-three-rivers@fs.fed.us) or mail written comments to District Ranger, Kirsten Kaiser, Three Rivers Ranger District, 12858 US Hwy 2, Troy, MT 59935.

**Your comments will be most helpful if received ASAP.**

### OLY PROJECT FEIS

The Three Rivers Ranger District Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for OLY is available online. A copy of the FEIS and Draft Record of Decision (Draft ROD) can be found on the web at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=45254>.

The Preferred Alternative identified in the FEIS proposes timber harvest activities on approximately 3,069 acres, prescribed burning on approximately 1,744 acres, and approximately 30 miles of watershed improvement work on roads already closed to public motorized use. Some of these roads have been identified as being needed for future management. For more information please contact Miles Friend, Team Leader, at the District office.

*This yurt (see photo) is available to rent at the Whitetail Campground \$15 per night. For More Information call the district at 295-4693.*



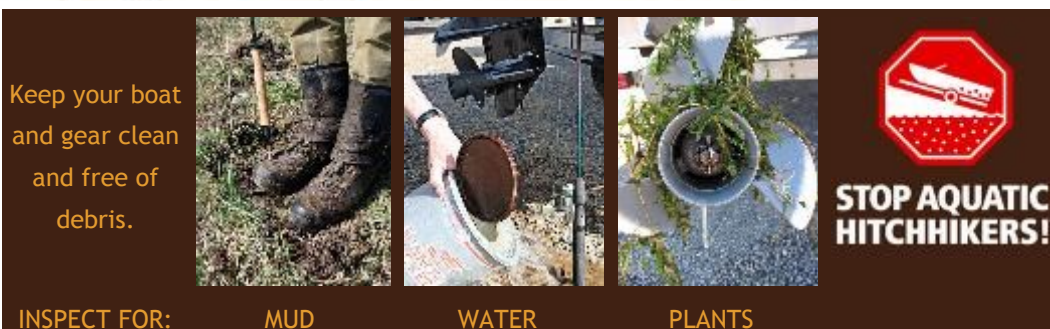
### AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

People love to spend time on and near the water. Protecting aquatic resources is important for all. The spreading of plants, fish, animals and other organisms to new waters threatens water habitats and recreational use. When introduced to another lake or stream, the new species may drastically affect the existing habitat and fisheries. It is extremely difficult or impossible to remove an aquatic species once it is introduced to a new water body. Stopping the spread of nuisance species requires only a few simple procedures:

1. Remove any visible mud, plants, fish or animals before transporting boats and other equipment
2. Eliminate water from equipment before transporting
3. Clean and dry anything that contacted water (boats, trailers, equipment, clothing, waders, dogs, etc.)
4. Never intentionally release plants, fish or animals into a body of water unless they came out of that body of water.

There is a check station set up at the Highway 2 and Bull Lake Highway junction. It is mandatory for all watercraft to stop and be inspected.

# INSPECT. CLEAN. DRY.



**Forest Service Mission: To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.**



## RECREATION



attending the Troy After School Program (ASP) learn about Alvord Lake from Dave Thorstenson, the District Recreation Manager. The YVFC, ASP and the district participated in a clean up day at Alvord Lake as part of an Earth Day celebration. A Community Forest Celebration is planned at Alvord Lake on July 8<sup>th</sup>. Call the district for more information.

The Whitetail Yurt is now available to be reserved on Recreation.gov. The Yurt will eventually be available to rent year round. Another early spring has allowed low elevation trails to be cleared early. Shannon Lake, Old Hwy2 and Alvord Lake trails are ready for spring hiking with more to come. Trail clearing updates are available to the public by searching <http://www.fs.usda/activity/kootenai/recreation/hiking> with new trails being updated weekly. The Sawtooth Fire of 2015 extensively damaged portions of Ross Creek trails 142 and 321. Forest Service crews were able to clear both trail corridors last fall. The Montana Conservation Corp will be repairing tread and clearing debris on both trails for two weeks in July. The Ross Creek trails are still closed at this time until the work is complete. The Ross Creek nature trail loop is open but it sustained damage (there are many exposed roots and the tread has become uneven in places) during a rain on snow event in December and the trail crew will be working on it at a future date. For more information check the website listed above or call the district office at 295-4693.



Steve Tralles on the Ross Creek Trail—Summer 2015

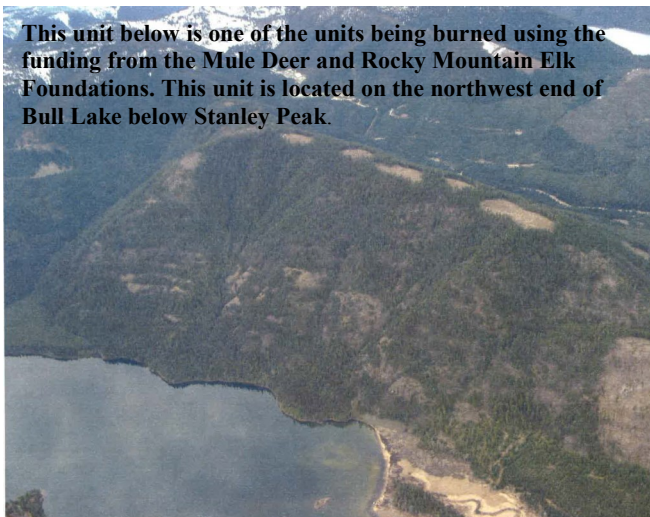
### *Answers to the Questions*

- 1) There are over 400 miles of hiking trails on the district.
- 2) There are 7 lookouts on the district. Three are available to rent, Keeler Lookout is used by the district during busy fire seasons, and Mt. Henry, Lost Horse, and Northwest Peaks are historic or not in use.
- 3) We have 5 rentals on the district. Mt. Baldy-Buckhorn Ridge, Yaak Mtn. and Garver Mtn. lookouts, Upper Ford Cabin, and the Yurt at Whitetail Campground.



**FIRE AND FUELS** Spring is here and the Three Rivers Ranger District is beginning to implement their spring prescribed burn program. If you have any questions about the prescribed burns or would like to be contacted prior to any burning in your area, please call the Three Rivers Ranger District at 406-295-4693 or Kootenai Dispatch at 406-283-7740.

The Three Rivers RD recently became recipients of \$20,000 in grant funds awarded from The Mule Deer Foundation and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Mandy Rockwell (wildlife biologist) and Vicki Stephens (Fuels Planner) worked collaboratively with Tonya Chilton-Radandt from the Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks in support of landscape-scale prescribed burning to enhance wildlife habitat in the Sparring Bulls Project area. The Sparring Bulls project planning effort proposes up to nearly 10,400 acres of natural fuels burning with an additional 832 acres of underburning after harvest.



**This unit below is one of the units being burned using the funding from the Mule Deer and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundations. This unit is located on the northwest end of Bull Lake below Stanley Peak.**

ings while maintaining the large overstory structure that would continue to provide cover. These larger landscape burn units contribute to a mosaic of vegetative conditions within the burn unit itself, as well as to the overall mosaic created through vegetation management within the larger project area. Landscape-scale habitat treatments are the most beneficial improvements we can do towards improving local mule deer and elk habitat.

Habitat restoration is desired to be more like historic conditions, which included more openings and areas in an early seral condition that would have provided better foraging opportunities for species like elk (and other big game), black and grizzly bears, migratory birds such as blue birds or chipping sparrows, edge associated species like Townsend's big-eared bats, and pileated woodpeckers that benefit from the development of large trees and snags.

The Mule Deer Foundation and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, which was founded in Troy, missions are to ensure the future of elk, other wildlife, their habitat and our hunting heritage.

Landscape scale burning is also planned in the Buckhorn Project, located along the Idaho/Montana border and six miles south of the Canadian border. The purpose is to help promote resilient vegetation conditions by managing towards characteristic landscape-level vegetation pattern, structure, patch size, fuel loading and species composition, accomplished through timber harvest and prescribed burning to provide long-term wildlife security and forage. This project will prescribed burn 11,623 acres of natural fuels as well as 750 acres of underburning after harvest.

*The picture on the right is Sparring Bulls Unit 52 after harvest and pile burning was completed. The elk sure like it.*



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## Debris Burn Tips



Call the Three Rivers RD annually for a burn permit from May - September.



Avoid burning on hot windy days.



Burn when relative humidity is high, not in the heat of the day.



Clear vegetation 10 feet around your burn pile. Keep your burn pile small.



Be prepared. Have a source of water and a shovel nearby.



Never leave your burn pile. Stay until it is completely out.

Call the Three Rivers Ranger District at 295-4693 if you have any questions

## ONE LESS SPARK ONE LESS WILDFIRE